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ABSTRACT

Joseph Campbell, Carl Jung, and Anne Tyler have all dealt with spiritual journeys and card reading in their writings. In his book "Tarot Revelations," Joseph Campbell discusses his first association with tarot cards, dating from 1943, when he was introduced to the symoblism of playing cards by his friend and mentor, Heinrich Zimmer. Carl Jung was interested in working toward an expanded consciousness. Although professors, both Campbell and Jung were interested in going beyond academic knowledge and were not limited to academic ways of pursuing knowledge. In "Searching for Caleb," a contemporary novel about family relations, Anne Tyler shows the ancient and metaphysical routine of reading cards for guidance, counseling, and predictions. The novel provides a history of three generations of the Peck family, from before 1900 to the early 1970s. Grandfather Peck is searching for his brother Caleb who had left home 61 years earlier. The female protagonist of the novel uses card reading to help Grandfather Peck in his search. Tyler presents card reading in a positive light, as does Pulitzer Prize winner Marsha Norman in her novel, "The Fortune Teller." Mainstream literature reflects a new and positive approach to card reading. In "Searching for Caleb," the cards were a useful, positive, unconventional, and liberating part of the character's spiritual journey and the adventure of life. (RS)

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JOSEPH CAMPBELL, JUNG, ANNE TYLER, AND "THE CARDS": THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN SEARCHING FOR CALEB

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Joseph Campbell, Jung, Anne Tyler, and "The Cards":

The Spiritual Journey in Searching for Caleb

> These cards are not read like books, you know. They have meanings assigned that you can memorize in half an hour, but ambiguous meanings....You must think of these cards as tags....Tags with strings attached, like those surprise boxes at parties. The strings lead into your mind. These cards will pull out what you already know, but have failed to admit or recognize. Which is why palmistry works as well, or tea leaves or the Tarot or crystal ball. They all have validity, yes, but only when coupled with your own intuitions" (Spoken by Madame Olita to Justine in Tyler's Searching for Caleb 136-37).

In his book Tarot Revelations (1987), Joseph Campbell discusses his first association with the cards dating from 1943, when he was introduced to the symbolism of playing cards by his friend and mentor, Heinrich Zimmer. It wasn't until 1967 that his interest in the cards was again sparked following a lecture he was giving at Esalen Institute in California when a member of the audience asked his interpretation of the Tarot cards. On his return to New York, he stopped in San Francisco where he had a Tarot card reading, the result of which was published in the book Tarot and You by Campbell's co-author of Tarot Revelations, Richard Roberts. Campbell remained fascinated by the cards and went on to research, write, and lecture on the symbolism of the cards. In Tarot Revelations, Campbell gives an interpretation of the twenty-two cards which make up the major arcana in a Tarot deck. Roberts, who read Campbell's cards and who remained a close friend and associate, says that Campbell and his book, The Hero with a Thousand

Faces (1949), "did not look to the academics for truth, but searched out the literature of the people: mythology" (Campbell and Roberts xi), which includes symbols and is, of course, where Campbell, Jung, and also Yeats were drawn to the cards.

We recall that Joseph Campbell never completed his Ph.D., but rather, in keeping with his philosophy that life is an adventure, decided that "free-wheeling, maverick life gave me a sense of the deep joy in doing something meaningful to me" (Campbell and Toms 126). Campbell went on to teach at Sarah Lawrence College and travel throughout the world, lecturing, teaching, writing, and, in essence as he liked to say, "following his bliss." Roberts says that "In this century, Jung and Campbell, more than any others, taught us the truth of death and rebirth, and the infinite vistas of the human spirit" (Campbell and Roberts ix).

In the Introduction to the book Jung and Tarot: An Archetypal Journey (1980), we read that Jung, too, was always working toward an expanded consciousness, an expanded awareness. To this end, he also was not limited to academic knowledge and academic ways of pursuing knowledge, and he, therefore, included "all sorts of non-rational forms of perception and knowing," for he was always interested in "expanding and strengthening the consciousness of man" (Nichols xiv). Further, we are told that "he rated very highly all non-rational ways along which man in the past has tried to explore the mystery of life and stimulate man's conscious knowledge of the expanding universe around him into new areas of being and knowing. This is the explanation of his interest . . . and is the explanation of the significance of Tarot" (Nichols xiv).

A final quotation on Jung's interest in the Tarot is that Jung

> recognized at once, as he did in so many other games and

> primordial attempts at divination of the unseen and the future, that Tarot had its origin and anticipation in profound patterns of the collective unconscious with access to potentials of increased awareness uniquely at the disposal of these patterns. It was another of those non-rational bridges across the apparent divide between unconscious and consciousness (Nichols xiv, xv),

or to use Tyler's term, the cards are a "tag" which spurs on fictional questers in Searching for Caleb who are open and willing enough to admit the validity of such "tags" to discover information helpful in their respective adventures of life. Admitting such experiences in her fiction, at least, Anne Tyler tells a fascinating story of modern-day questers who avail themselves of information through "the cards," not Tarot cards, but ordinary playing cards.

In her very contemporary novel about family relations, Anne Tyler shows the ancient and metaphysical tool of reading cards for guidance, counseling, and predictions throughout Searching for Caleb. Card reading frequently is imbued with negative connotations associated with the occult and is, no doubt, a subject which is taboo, yet also perhaps a source of fascination for many of Tyler's audience. Without making a big deal about it and certainly without forcing the validity of reading cards on her audience, Tyler does in fact show that card reading can be helpful, accurate, and a step toward greater freedom in one's life. Further, as I have researched something of the history of card reading, its use in literature, and how Jung and Campbell (among others) viewed Tarot card reading, I feel that Tyler has opened a non-rational, psychic, metaphysical door, however gently, that for many of her reading public might have remained closed.

The protagonist of Searching for Caleb, published in 1975, is a card reader, an accurate one who uses her ability to help others. The first sentence of the novel reads, "The fortune teller and her grandfather went to New York City on an Amtrak train, racketing along with their identical, peaky white faces set due north." Further down this first page, Tyler gives more information on "the fortune teller" whose name we later learn is Justine:

> The fortune teller, who was not a gypsy or even Spanish but a lanky, weedy blond woman in a Breton hat and a faded shift, took a National Geographic from a straw bag on the floor and started reading it from back to front. She flicked the pages after barely a glance, rapidly swinging one crossed foot. Half-way through the magazine she bent to rummage through the bag again. She felt her grandfather slide his eyes over to see what she was keeping there. Tarot cards? A crystal ball? Some other tool of her mysterious, disreputable profession? But all she showed was a spill of multicolored kerchief and then a box of Luden's cough drops, which she took out and offered him (Tyler 5-6).

In this brief description, we are also introduced to a major theme and point of tension in the novel as we see through the Grandfather's eyes and feel his negativity toward his granddaughter's "disreputable profession" as a card reader, and this theme can be stated as follows: because of the potentially debilitating influence of the non-accepting, stern and restrictive judgments by family upon family, individual freedom of expression is all too often shamed out of existence. Most of the Peck family are so concerned with doing what they "should" do according to the dictates and conventions of society that individual

freedom is, thus, often forfeited in order to maintain close family connections, in order to "fit in." There were certain family rules based on societal norms as to what one "should" or "should not" do: to give two examples, "Justine had been taught that a Peck does not gesticulate" (295), and Grandfather Peck believes he shouldn't say what he feels because, as he explains, "In my childhood I was trained to hold things in" (258). Certainly reading cards or having one's cards read are things one just shouldn't do. Though in some ways Justine and her husband (also her cousin) had broken away from family restrictions since the beginning of their marriage over eighteen years ago, the process is only complete by the end of the novel, the duration of which is approximately a year. By the close of the story, Justine and her husband, in addition to their uncle Caleb many years before, have successfully broken out of the restrictive familial and also societal ties that bind and suffocate. By making such a break, these characters, then, are able not only to express their uniqueness (differences from others) and let go of family expectations without any sense of shame, but also to enjoy the freedom to live the kind of lives they want to live without needing the approval of anyone. In contemporary terms, we currently refer to such actions, literally such "breakthroughs" as "getting a life," or "taking control of one's life."

The cards, symbolically and literally are a part of that liberating process. Tyler presents her card reader and card readings innocuously and in a non-threatening, matter-of-fact manner which tends to dispel the powerful fear of the unknown for those in the reading audience for whom card reading is foreign and, hence, most likely those for whom a "red flag" goes up. Tyler presents the reading of cards so continuously and consistently in a positive light that even the most

conservative of Tyler's reading audience, I think, couldn't object, or fail to notice, or perhaps even be fairably impressed by the prominent and positive place given to the cards. --And I'm talking about those in the reading audence for whom card reading is a "red flag" and associated with "flakes," or gypsies or, even worse, Satanism and devil worshippers (though presumably the latter wouldn't be reading Tyler).

The novel provides a history of three generations of the Peck family from prior to 1900 to the early 1970's. Over these years, the family had achieved a certain status in society since the beginning of the century. Nearly all of the "children" from the early 1900's, whom we meet through a series of flashbacks, are of course, grown and aged or deceased by 1973, the year the story takes place, yet those of the Peck family (with the exception of Justine and company) still alive are still living in adjoining houses in Roland Park, a suburb of Baltimore. Justine, who is forty at the time of the novel, and her husband, Duncan, and their eighteen-year-old daughter, Meg, had, however, never lived in Roland Park. Duncan had long been considered the black sheep of the family because he eschewed Peck family values, would have no part in the Pecks' conformity, and even made the Peck family in particular, an object of his ridicule:

> "You know what they're like?" (there was no need to say whom he meant.) "You know who they remind me of? People choosing a number on a radio dial. The way they ignore anything that isn't Peck, like flicking past stations that don't concern them, just a split second of jazz or ballgames or revivalist ministers and they wince and move on, and settle finally on the one acceptable station that plays Mantovani. Nothing uncomfortable, nothing extreme, nothing they can't tolerate"

(96).

Duncan, Justine, and Meg had moved frequently, because Duncan soon became bored with any job he held after a certain amount of time. They had few possessions and little money and only Meg objected, though quietly, to their nomadic life-style. Fifteen years prior to the beginning of the novel, Grandfather Peck had come for a "visit" and ended up staying with them. The grandfather, who is ninety-three in 1973, is a retired judge whose sole purpose in life now is to find his long-lost brother Caleb, now eighty-eight years old, and missing for sixty-one years. Caleb left home one day in 1912 because he was a musician, a calling and a profession unacceptable to the business-minded, white-collar professionalism of the Peck family. Since Justine doesn't work outside of the home and is very willing to help her rather crochetty Grandfather with his mission to find Caleb, she has aided him in his search by visting numerous places and people who might know something of Caleb's whereabouts during the last sixty-one years. She had also consulted her cards with the question, "Will Grandfather ever find Caleb?" The answer she got from her cards was "Yes," an answer that proved accurate. What she didn't ask was if he would be able to see and talk to him before either died, and though later in the story the Grandfather knew his brother was alive and that he was living in Louisiana, Grandfather Peck died before a meeting between the two brothers could take place. At the end of the novel when they finally locate Caleb and Justine goes to visit him in a Louisiana nursing home where he has been for the past seven years, Caleb asks Justine how they had found him. She goes on to tell Caleb,

"I used to read the cards for you."

"The---?"

"Fortune-telling cards."

"Oh yes," he said.

"I asked, would Grandfather ever locate you? The cards said yes. However there was always room for error, because Grandfather didn't cut the cards himself. He wouldn't have approved. I never thought of asking would he actually see you" (292).

The point here is that, once again, the cards were accurate. Information to be gleaned psychically using the cards as a tool is, however, often dependent on the questions asked.

As a character, Justine is very likeable, accepting, non-judgmental, friendly, a good listener, easy to talk to, and a giving sort of person who enjoys helping her Grandfather, just as she enjoys meeting and talking to people in the small towns where she and Duncan and Meg have lived. When word gets around town that Justine reads cards, many people come to her for readings:

People came filing through Justine's kitchen for advice on their spring problems: love affairs, unexplainable bouts of wistfulness, sudden waves of grief over people and places they had not even thought they liked. Justine laid her cards on the rosewood table.

"It will work out."

"Just wait through this."

"You will feel better a week from now" (145).

In a town in Virginia where they had just moved, newcomer Justine introduced herself to some of the townspeople as a card reader by telling fortunes at a church bazaar, after which she had a steady stream of clients. We are told that the first clients were "mostly

women, faded housewives and very young girls--and their lives were indistinguishable too, and their futures, which even he [Duncan] could have predicted, but Justine was patient and kind with them and it was plain they all loved her" (147). Later she made friends with the men who worked with Duncan, the "blunt, sawdusty carpenters": "she made friends with them and told fortunes for their wives and kept their children" (147). In another town where she again made her debut at a church bazaar telling fortunes, she is greeted with, "Mrs. Peck? Why, I thought you would be darker. We've heard such amazing things about you, dear. Now somewhere, let me see now. . . . Why! Here's Mrs. Linthicum, our pastor's wife. Mrs. Peck here is just a wizard telling fortunes" (183). The pastor's wife exclaims, "Oh, then you can start on me" (183). Too, Justine and those for whom she had read cards liked to maintain contact long after she and Duncan had moved to the next town: "On Main Street Justine saw someone she knew--Old Miss Wheeler, who used to ask the cards whether she should put her father in a nursing home--and she wanted to stop and speak to her" (227).

Justine had learned to read cards from Madame Olita, a Radcliffe graduate and former high school algebra teacher, who had quickly perceived that Justine had the interest, ability which she could develop through study and practice, and an inherent good will toward others, all of which made her a perfect student to learn to read cards, in Madame Olita's eyes. Though one can read cards and can be very good at helping others get aspects of their lives in proper perspective, the card reader herself (like any counselor, therapist, psychologist, teacher, doctor, etc.) often rather ironically doesn't have clear answers for his/her own life, and we find Justine grappling with just such a truth in her life:

She sat alone at the kitchen table and shuffled her cards. Then she laid them in rows, idly, as if she were her own client. She yawned and looked to see what had shaped up.

She saw journeys, upheavals, surprises, new people, luck, crowds, hasty decisions, and unexpected arrivals.

Which meant, of course, that Madame Olita was right: it was not possible to tell your own fortune.

All the same, if she had had a client with these cards! She imagined how she would glance at him, interested for the first time, amazed at his quicksilver life after all the stale ones she had seen up till now. She imagined possessing such a future herself, having to consult the cards every day, so much was going on.

Then it seemed to her that she was not reading her fortune after all, but accepting little square papers that told her what was expected of her next. She had no choice but to stand up, and gather her cards, and wrap them in their piece of silk before she went to the bedroom to wake Duncan (146).

As a result of reading Tyler's Searching for Caleb, if one's interest in "the cards" has been sparked at all, several questions come to mind. Where did reading cards originate? Perhaps more importantly, how does it work? Where do we see cards reflected in literature? And, particularly, what place, if any, does card reading have in the modern world?

First, the origin of psychic readings, which includes card reading, is unknown. Making psychic predictions and doing psychic counseling has been a part of mankind's history throughout the world. Only the particular tools, or methods, change. From the ancient

Egyptian civilization is a system of mythology and symbols which include the Cartouche, a pack of twenty-five cards, used then and today for psychic readings. From Scandanavia, readers of Tolkien will recognize the Viking Runes, stones with symbols which are an equivalent to the cards. From China we see the ancient method of psychic reading of coins, called the I Ching, still practiced today. From the ancient Greek civilization, we find Apollo, god of prophecy and healing, and his temple in Delphi where priests and priestesses were famous for their psychic predictions and their accuracy. Even Socrates, as Plato recounts in The Apology, was known to have consulted the Delphic oracle for answers and guidance.

The first tangible evidence that we have as to the existence of Tarot cards comes from Dante's time, with seventeen cards made for Charles VI of France in 1392 now preserved in Paris in the Bibliotheque Nationale (Campbell and Roberts 5). Joseph Campbell thought he recognized the tradition of the Tarot throughout Dante's work, and particularly in The Divine Comedy: "A single philosophical strain, it seemed to me, could be recognized as supporting, on one hand, the mighty edifice of Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy and, on the other, the enigmatic imagery of a contemporary pack of cards" (Campbell and Roberts 5). Campbell felt he could follow a similar tradition of mythology (symbols, which would have to include the Tarot) from Dante, through Yeats, Joyce (on whom Campbell did extensive research), Eliot "in a somewhat more stilted way," and Jung (Campbell and Toms 126).

From medieval through contemporary times, card reading has been negatively associated with gypsies as we saw in the quotation used at the beginning of this paper from the first page of Searching for Caleb, and such references are consistent with similar references in Pride and

Prejudice (with the bogus reading by a supposed itinerant gypsy) and a passing reference to gypsies and fortune telling in Wuthering Heights, for example. Yeats, clearly, had intimate knowlede of the Tarot symbols, paticularly the Tower, the Magician, the Wheel of Fortune, and the Chariot, symbols that appear in his poetry. In Yeats the Initiate we read that one of Yeats' few treasures found in his apartment from the 1880's was a deck of Tarot cards (Raine 177). T.S. Eliot gives us the most famous literary reference to card reading in the twentieth century in The Waste Land, Part I, with "Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,/Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,/With a wicked pack of cards" (Eliot 30). And Eliot thinks he unconsciously borrowed his now famous clairvoyant's name from Aldous Huxley's novel Crome Yellow in which a fake fortune teller is named Madame Sesostris (Kermode and Hollander 1985).

In recent literature, besides Tyler, Pulitzer Prize winner Marsha Norman reveals a first-hand knowledge of Tarot cards in her novel The Fortune Teller (1987), yet, like Tyler, though acknowledging a negative perception of card reading, casts her characters as serious students of the cards who feel that they have much to learn and benefit from in consulting the cards. It would appear that with these two novels anyway, mainstream literature is reflecting a new and positive approach to card reading. Outside of literature, yet still within contemporary creative arts, Salvador Dali has made his contribution to the cards in that he designed his own pictoral version of the seventy-eight cards in a Tarot deck, available in both card and book form, and first published in the United State in 1985.

To return to Searching for Caleb, the end of the novel shows Justine asking Duncan, a skeptic on such matters, if she could read his

cards, something she had never done before. Though he just smiled back at her, she laid out her cards and proceeded to read:

> "You are about to alter your entire way of life," she said, smacking down some jack or king. She was watching Duncan's face.
>
> "Yes, well," said Duncan, reaching for his bottle.
>
> "You are going to become a fix-it man for a carnival."
>
> He set the bottle down.
>
> "Your wife will be their fortune teller. You'll have a purple trailer in Parvis, Marland, and live happily ever after. How do you like me so far?"
>
> "You're crazy," he said, but he was smiling, and he didn't even protest when Justine spilled all the rest of his bourbon while leaning over the cards to give him a kiss (318).

When the novel ends, Justine and Duncan [Meg is married now] are moving once again, this time to the purple trailer to join the carnival. Though by Peck family standards and even white-collar American social standards, such a move would be looked down upon, to say the least, it is really perfect for Justine and Duncan: they love to move anyway, and now they are assured of jobs that they both love and a home on wheels, which means their moving process will be greatly simplified from the arduous procedure it has been in the past. They are by the end of the novel what Joseph Campbell refers to as "following their bliss," or, in other words, finding and doing exactly and only what fulfills them and makes them happy. In <u>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</u>, Campbell talks about the risks of one who chooses to heed what he refers to as the Call, or what he describes in <u>An Open Life</u> as "the feeling that there's an adventure for him" (24). He states that if one has the guts to follow the risk, however, life opens, opens,

> opens up all along the line. I'm not superstitious, but I do believe in spiritual magic . . . I feel that if one follows what I call one's "bliss"--the thing that really gets you deep in the gut and that you feel is your life--doors will open up. They do! They have in my life and they have in many lives that I know of . . . . And the other point is if you follow your bliss, you'll have your bliss, whether you have money or not. If you follow money, you may lose money, and then you don't have even that. The secure way is really the insecure way and the way in which the richness of the quest accumulates is the right way (Campbell and Toms 24, 25).

Justine and Duncan were "following their bliss" throughout their marriage, and as we leave them at the end of the novel, a major door has opened for them, and the cards have, in fact, been a useful, positive, unconventional, liberating part of their process, their spiritual journey, their "adventure," which is life. Perhaps Campbell had in mind Blake's definition of "bliss" from the Visions of the Daughters of Albion. Blake's use of "bliss" describes not only Campbell's concept, but also the last picture we see of Justine and Duncan on their way to join the carnival as fortune teller and fix-it man, respectively:

> Take thy bliss O Man!
> And sweet shall be thy taste & sweet thy infant joys renew!
> (Plate 6, lines 2-3)
>
> Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!
> (Plate 8, line 10)

And surely what is holy and also filled with bliss are "the cards" and the spiritual journey in Searching for Caleb.

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